

♠♥♦♣ PLAYING IT SAFE ♠♥♦♣

In this deal, you are South have dealt yourself this hand:

| | |
|---|-------|
| S | South |
| ♠ | AJ542 |
| ♥ | K93 |
| ♦ | Q83 |
| ♣ | K7 |

You have a normal 13 point 1♠ opener. Your partner responds 2NT. This is the game forcing convention – Jacoby 2NT – that promises at least 4 Spades and 12 HCP.

Of course, this is forcing to game. But your rebid must described just what your hand is like. If you have a singleton or void, you bid it at the 3-level. This could suggest a slam if North has no wasted values in that suit. If you don't have shortness but have 15-17 balanced points, you raise to 3NT. If you have no shortness, but 18+ points, you make the strongest rebid you can make – 3♠.

However, if you have a balanced hand between 12 and 14 points, you make the weakest bid you can make – 4♠.

So it is in 4♠ that you rest, and West leads the ♣Q. You see this dummy:

| | |
|---|-------|
| N | North |
| ♠ | K1086 |
| ♥ | 854 |
| ♦ | AKJ9 |
| ♣ | A6 |

West's Lead: ♣Q

| | |
|---|-------|
| S | South |
| ♠ | AJ542 |
| ♥ | K93 |
| ♦ | Q83 |
| ♣ | K7 |

You have a total of 31 HCP but you are in danger of losing 4 tricks. It looks like you'll have to guess the Spade suit correctly. With 9 Spades, it is slightly more probable that Spades will split 2-2 or the ♠Q singleton; than 3-2 with the ♠Q on side. This is the 8-Ever; 9-Never adage. However, here, playing the Spades from the top could lead to disaster.

If East has 3 Spades with the Queen, he can send a Heart through your hand – your ♥K being captured by West’s ♥A and the contract losing 4 tricks. You must take the anti-probable finesse against East so that East never gets the lead. You win the opening lead in the dummy and cash the ♠K. If the ♠Q doesn’t fall, you lead a small Spade to your hand. If East plays low, you insert the ♠J. Even if it loses to West’s ♠Q, you are safe from a Heart lead.

Here, the ♠J wins and you draw the rest of the Spades and discard a losing Heart on the dummy’s long Diamond suit.

This is the entire deal:

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|--|----------------|---------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | | N North | W | N | E | S |
| | | ♠ K1086 | | P | 2NT | P |
| | | ♥ 854 | | P | P | P |
| | | ♦ AKJ9 | | | | |
| | | ♣ A6 | | | | |
| W West | | | E East | | | |
| ♠ 7 | | | ♠ Q93 | | | |
| ♥ AQ107 | | | ♥ J62 | | | |
| ♦ 76542 | | | ♦ 10 | | | |
| ♣ QJ10 | | | ♣ 985432 | | | |
| | | S South | | | | |
| | | ♠ AJ542 | | | | |
| | | ♥ K93 | | | | |
| | | ♦ Q83 | | | | |
| | | ♣ K7 | | | | |
| | | | 4♠ S | | NS: 0 EW: 0 | |

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <https://tinyurl.com/2co5r36h>, or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the “Next” button on the bottom to advance through each trick. If you don’t want to see the opponents hands, click on the white area in the South hand before you start.

Alternatively, by clicking on “Play” you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.